



# Canoe Trip #3

## ***Otter Lake (Missinipe) - Stanley - Iskwatikan Lake - Thomas Lake -Hunter Bay (Lac La Ronge) - La Ronge***

**Length of Trip:** 130 Kilometres (81 Miles)  
**Time Required to Complete Trip:** 6 to 7 days  
**Number of Portages:** 7

### **Warning:**

Water levels and canoeing conditions on many Saskatchewan rivers and lakes vary from time to time, causing changes in the appearance of the various landmarks described in this booklet, as well as causing hazards not described herein. It is the canoeist's responsibility to proceed with caution and alertness, using discretion and good judgement at all times. The information in this booklet is intended to be of general assistance only, and the Government of Saskatchewan assumes no responsibility for its use. Canoeists are reminded that they travel at their own risk at all times.

### **Access to Starting Point:**

Canoes may be launched from the Saskatchewan Government campground at Missinipe (Walker Bay) on Otter Lake 80 kilometres (50 Miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102. Otter Lake forms part of the Churchill River system.

An alternate starting point for this trip is from below the rapids at the Saskatchewan Government campground at Otter Rapids 88 kilometres (55 miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102.

Arrangements for the safe parking of vehicles may be made with one of the fishing camp outfitters at Missinipe.

Accommodation, air-charter, food, gasoline and telephone services are also available at Missinipe.

### **Maps:**

- 73 P/1 Cartier Lake
- 73 P/2 Hunter Bay
- 73 P/3 La Ronge
- 73 P/7 Stanley
- 73 P/8 Nistowiak Lake
- 73 P/10 Otter Lake
- Optional: 73 P9 Guncoat Bay
- Optional: Hydrographic Map #6281
- Optional: La Ronge (If this last map is used, maps 73 P/1,2 and 3 become optional)

### **About the Trip:**

The first part of this trip takes the canoeist through lakes of the Churchill River system, following part of Saskatchewan's historic fur trade route as far as Nistowiak Falls on the Rapid River.

Early in the trip the historic community of Stanley Mission, site of the oldest church in Saskatchewan, is passed. A wide variety of supplies is available at general stores in Stanley, as well as telephone communication and road access via Highways 915 (gravel) and 102 (gravel and paved).

This trip is not strictly a wilderness trip in its entirety as a number of fishing camps will be seen along portions of the route. However, the opportunities for wilderness camping and fishing are extensive.

Northern pike and walleye occur in all waters; lake trout are found in the larger lakes.

The early part of this trip is well travelled and trails are in good shape. The lakes are fairly large and sometimes quite rough. The use of larger (5.2 to 5.5 metres or 17 to 18 foot) canoes is recommended, and the use of a small outboard motor for auxiliary power might be considered by those so inclined.

Because river current is only rarely apparent, this trip can be made in either direction (Start at La Ronge and end at Missinipe). For this reason, portage descriptions are given for travel in both directions.

### **The Canoe Trip:**

After travelling generally southeast on Otter Lake approximately 16 kilometres (10 miles), the canoeist comes to the first portage.

**Portage Number 1, Stony Mountain Portage:**

Connecting the southeast end of Otter Lake with a small lake below Robertson Falls. 73 metres (80 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes a 3 metre (10 foot) fall.

From the southeast shore of Otter Lake, this portage starts on the west shore of Eyinew Island 45 metres (49 yards) above the head of the fall (Grid location 277563, Map 73 P/10) and ends at a rock shelf at the foot of the fall. The portage can be seen from the water and appears as a break in the spruce and birch of the shoreline.

**Portage Number 2, Mountain Portage:**

Connecting the small lake between Robertson and Twin Falls to the northwest end of Mountain Lake. 278 metres (304 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a 6 metre (20 foot) fall.

From the small lake between Robertson and Twin Falls, this portage starts at a break in the trees immediately east of two small islands (Grid location 280558, Map 73 P/10) in a small cove along the southeast shore 45 metres (49 yards) west of a group of buildings belonging to an outfitter's camp. It ends at a break in the shoreline vegetation 400 metres (437 yards) southwest of the fall. An outfitter's dock is located about midway between the falls and the portage.

The trip continues in a generally southeasterly direction past Amuchewaspimewin Cliff (Also known as 'Shooting-Up Place') (Grid location 283420, Map 73 P/7) to the historic community of Stanley Mission. From Stanley, this trip continues in an east-northeast direction down the Churchill River for approximately five kilometres (three miles) to Stanley Rapids.

**Portage Number 3, Stanley Portage:**

Connecting Mountain Lake to Drope Lake. 92 metres (100 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes a Class 2 rapid.

NOTE TO CANOEISTS: On approaching Stanley Rapids, stay close to the north, or left shore above the north side of the island dividing these rapids so as to avoid the Class 3 rapid on the south, or right side of the island.

From Mountain Lake, this portage starts inconspicuously in the grasses on the north side of the northernmost channel 75 metres (82 yards) above the rapid (Grid location 333427, Map 73 P/8).

From Drope Lake, this portage starts directly opposite a large rock situated in the fast water at the foot of the rapid.

On the south side of this channel (north shore of the island), there is a shorter alternate portage trail with rollers to facilitate the dragging of boats and canoes around the rapid. Both trails are currently used.

In Frog Narrows (Grid location 376415, Map 73 P/8), connecting Drope and Nistowiak Lake, the current can vary from moderate to fast, depending on water levels. Special care should be taken when paddling this section because of the eddies and current boils in the river.

Shortly after passing Frog Narrows the route leaves the Churchill River and proceeds up the Rapid River, past scenic Nistowiak Falls to Iskwatikan Lake.

**Portage Number 4, Nistowiak Falls Portage:**

Connecting Nistowiak Lake to Iskwatikan Lake. 1000 metres (1093 yards) long and in excellent condition, though quite steep in spots. This portage bypasses a 12 metre (40 foot) fall, a 2 metre (6.5 foot) fall and numerous rapids and ledges in a narrow, winding gorge.

From the south shore of Nistowiak Lake, this portage starts on bare rock a few metres (yards) to the west of the inflowing river (Grid location 402393, Map 73 P/8). An outfitter's camp is situated at the start of this portage.

From the north shore of Iskwatikan Lake, this portage starts from bare rock 15 metres (16 yards) to the west of the 2 metre (6.5 foot) falls located at the river outlet (Grid location 402385, Map 73 P/8).

A short side trail roughly half way along this portage leads to a viewing point above the main fall. This sight is well worth the short side trip.

NOTE: Experienced canoeists travelling from Iskwatikan Lake to the Churchill River may consider portaging 20 metres (22 yards) past the upper fall and descending by canoe through about 400 metres (437 yards) of minor Class 2 rapids to a landing point on the west shore 30 metres (33 yards) above the main fall (Grid location 401387, Map 73 P/8). If this choice is made, thereby shortening the portage by one third for downstream travellers only, it is strongly recommended that paddlers unfamiliar with the area first visit and note details of the lower landing on foot, so that there is no chance whatsoever of overshooting this crucial landing.

**Portage Number 5:**

Connecting Rabbit Bay on Iskwatikan Lake with the north shore of Thomas Lake. 885 metres (968 yards) long and in good condition. From Iskwatikan Lake, this portage starts at an inconspicuous break in the shoreline brush at the extreme south end of Rabbit Bay (Grid location 362311, Map 73 P/8).

From Thomas Lake, this portage starts at a conspicuous, grassy break in the shoreline brush midway along the extreme northern shore of the lake (Grid location 354304, Map 73 P/8).

NOTE: When portaging from Iskwatikan Lake to Thomas Lake, the trail divides after 530 metres (580 yards). Take the right or west fork to avoid the muskeg.

**Portage Number 6:**

Connecting Thomas Lake with a small nameless lake to the southeast. 458 metres (501 yards) long and in good condition.

From Thomas Lake, this portage starts from a rocky shelf on the east shore approximately two-thirds of a kilometre (795 yards) from the entrance to a narrow bay at the south end of the lake (Grid location 343254, Map 73 P/8).

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts at a conspicuous marshy break on the northeast shore of the lake (Grid location 347253, Map 73 P/8).

**Portage Number 7:**

Connecting the small nameless lake with Hunter Bay of Lac La Ronge. 263 metres (288 yards) long and in good condition.

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts on the east shore at the lake's outlet which is a short beaver canal blocked by a beaver dam (Grid location 351252, Map 73 P/8).

From Hunter Bay, this portage starts at a conspicuous break in the shoreline vegetation back of a small sand beach on the shore of the bay north of Hayworth Island (Grid location 352249, Map 73 P/8).

The remaining portion of this trip involves a large amount of travel over the exposed waters of Hunter Bay and the main body of Lac La Ronge. Dangerous winds and waves can often be avoided by making crossings over open stretches of water in the early morning or late evening when the wind usually drops. In case of emergency or persistent bad weather, a boat could probably be hired from outfitters located in the narrows between Hunter Bay and the main body of Lac la Ronge to complete the trip to La Ronge. The end point of this trip is the community of La Ronge where hotel, restaurant and transportation services are available.

WRITTEN BY: Original script by Peter Gregg, reviewed in 1989 by Historic Trails Canoe Club.

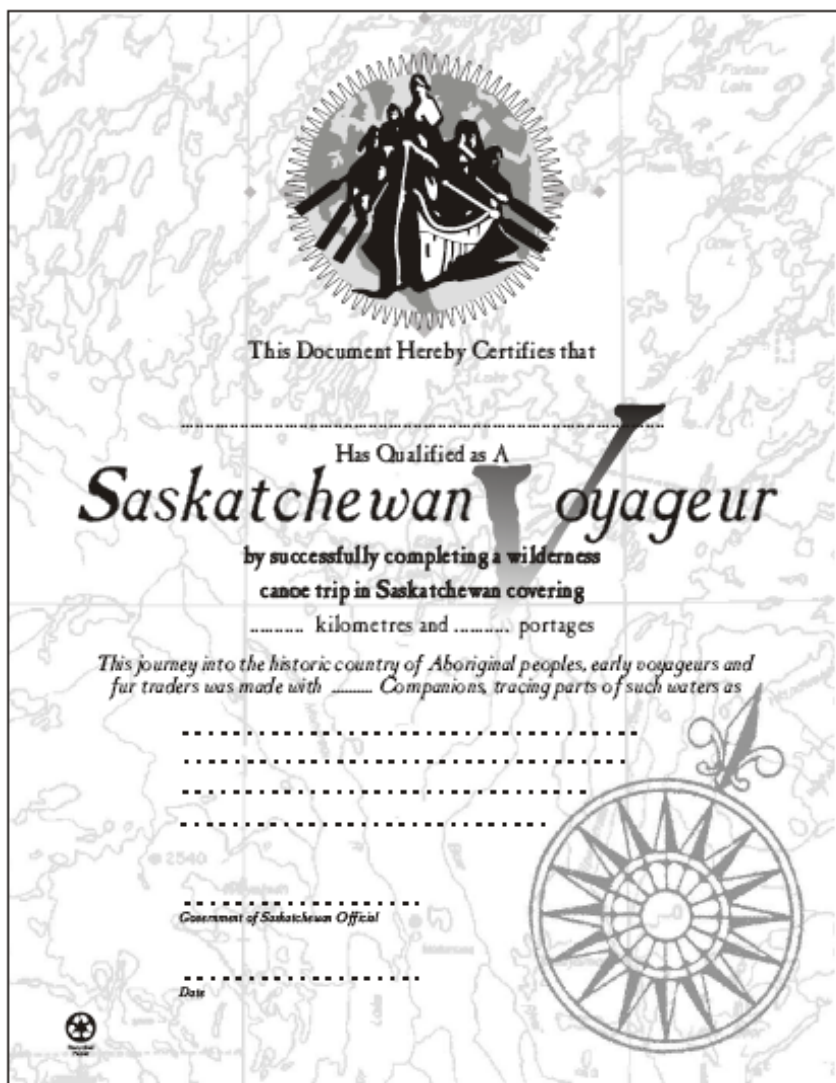
**ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:**

To minimize your impact on the environment while canoeing along Saskatchewan waterways, please keep in mind these safe and sensible practices:

Make every canoe trip a clean trip! Follow the pack in - pack out rule. When breaking camp, erase all evidence that you were there. Leave your campsite cleaner than you found it.

Consider the wildlife and their habitat: While portaging or camping, stay on the trails to prevent any disturbance to the wildlife and natural vegetation.

Fire Prevention: Forest fires along canoe routes are an ever present danger. It is vital that all campfires are kept small and are thoroughly extinguished with water after use. Never leave a fire until you are sure it is 'dead'.



Be sure to obtain an official Saskatchewan Voyageur Certificate upon completion of your canoe trip. Before you start out, check in at one of the registration points and then again immediately after your journey is over. You will then become an official Saskatchewan Voyageur receiving a certificate as a memento of your canoe experience in Saskatchewan.

**Registration Points:**

Ministry offices in La Ronge, Prince Albert, Green Lake, Beauval, Ile-a-la Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, La Loche, Weyakwin, Stony Rapids, Pinehouse, Southend, Wollaston Lake, Sandy Bay, Pelican Narrows, Creighton, Cumberland House, Saskatoon, Pierceland, Loon Lake; Meadow Lake Provincial Park, Narrow Hills Provincial Park and the Visitor Information Centre at La Ronge.



**Ministry of  
Tourism, Parks,  
Culture and Sport**

**For further information contact:**

Toll Free: 1-800-205-7070

Fax: (306) 787-7000

Email: [info.TPCS@gov.sk.ca](mailto:info.TPCS@gov.sk.ca)

**SASKATCHEWAN  
PARKS**